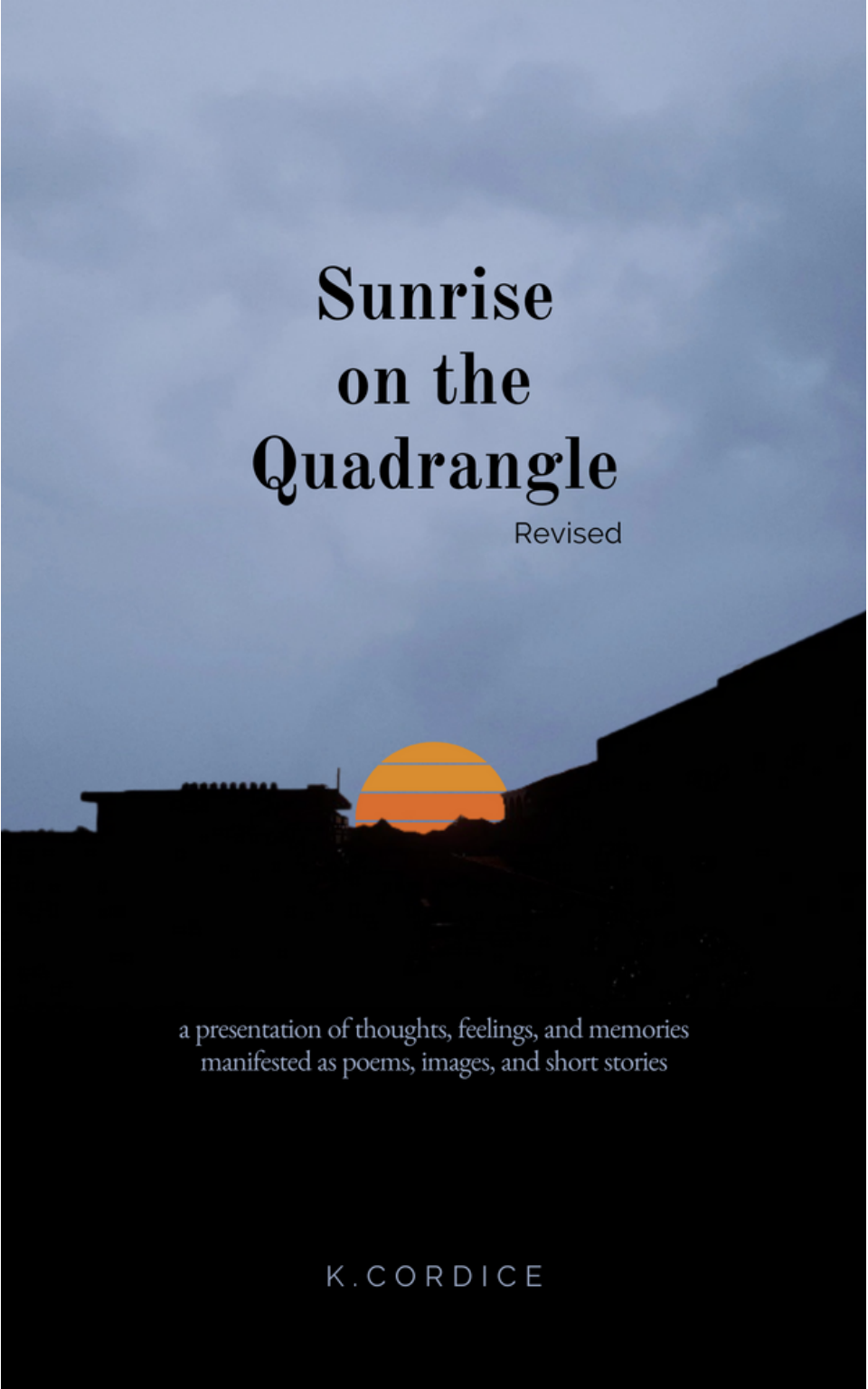
Sunrise on the Quadrangle

Revised



a presentation of thoughts, feelings, and memories
manifested as poems, images, and short stories

K.CORDICE

SUNRISE ON THE QUADRANGLE

tabula rasa

SUNRISE ON THE QUADRANGLE

A presentation of thoughts, feelings, and memories:
manifested as poems, images, and short stories

Kervisha L.A Cordice

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Preface

As we exist, one undeniable fact, applicable to us all, is that while we exist, we experience. These experiences can range from a sensory overload at a party, to sitting alone with our thoughts in a silent room or dreaming. Thoughts, feelings and memories are experiences that are common to many of us and are birthed as a result of various expected and unexpected occurrences.

The idea for this collection, which I prefer to refer to as a presentation, presented itself to me during one of the most majorly unexpected occurrences of my life; attending university.

This idea was birthed mainly from my lack of self-confidence in my art, whether it was singing, writing, dancing or performance poetry, I could not bring myself to where I needed to be in order to acquire the self-confidence I evidently had been lacking.

Since poetry was the centre of my life at that period of time (my first year of university), I challenged myself to create work that I loved, that I felt, that I wanted to see created. In addition to that, I told myself that I must not only create but compile said creations and publish them at the end of my degree (after I had graduated and crossed the stage).

The initial plan was to publish only poems, but that quickly became "and short stories", which further became "...and pictures", after some inspiration.

I could speak forever explaining what this collection is and what it means to me, but in simple terms I'd say, "a lot", it is a lot of me put on paper, and it means a lot to me as a result.

Much of the following is a culmination of creations from my three years at university.

I appreciate you for reaching this far. Thank you for being you, thank you for being you to me. I hope you enjoy the ride.

tabula rasa

... Chapter One

White Owl

An owl visited yesterday,

White, to stand out from the night,
Channelling under its wings, a mystical wisdom.
Divine, as a willow tree made home.

It settled, perched in its ethereal glory.

For the Love of Life and Death

Crouched
Beneath
A
Towering
Poui
Tree
I am reminded that I am minute
Mistook bottle cap for bones;
Dusted them then recycled
Returned
To
The
Ground
By
Some
Wandering
Root
I kissed my Ancestors' grave.
Now, dusting my palms,
I am reminded
That there is both life and death in this soil.

Still Breathing

We are called tender and too
masculine
then
too much heat to stand too near
and wrong
because we are unaware of our blaze
so
with our legs crossed
we are fanning a flame
when still; we are a forest fire
loud; an untamed dog

tender; too little
tough; too much
silent; still breathing

Blink Twice if You Love Me

To me it was about learning to speak in different languages,
while our eyes communicated through a blend of codes.

I love you;

The way truck drivers love rain-filled potholes.
Translation: I want to fall into you; no questions asked.
No cares for those around us.

The way pigeons love finding the perfect angle.
Translation: I hope you see me falling without regret.

Eternal Puddle

A child drowned yesterday.
He gargled brown tears;
Mud colored,
Like fake homemade chocolate cake.

He did, yesterday.
Recalled that May showers bear fruit.
and bring flowers that dare to look pretty on caskets
and the fabric, hanging, on a bassinet, swinging.

While playing in the rain.

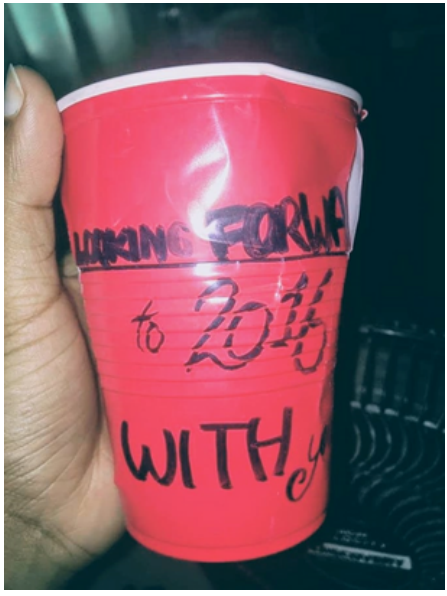
He felt his limbs sink, like a stone; skipped.
Heard his gargles, like footsteps in muddy puddles.
Once, then twice.
A child

Died.

Only if You Want to

You be foundation;
be trembling mahogany afraid to fall over; to break.
Be galvanize hooded
too fluid to hold on to
be home to yourself
be enough woman to be too much woman to want to lose.
Then turn the lights off
see that you are just as home in your darkness.
Just as beautiful, young, wild, and enough
Too much woman to want to lose.
Do not leave yourself.

The 2 Cents Movement 2015 lime



When You're Sad

When you don't feel like enough you will be tempted to fill your hollow.
You will remember that this feeling is familiar.
That your thoughts have made your stomach a punching bag too many times.
You will tell yourself that you need to become more; to expand.
When these feelings come
remember that it is okay to want to become large.
That growth fills the hollow
And shines light on the black hole of emotions that makes your stomach contract.
But in your desire to grow and become better know that now, in this moment; as you breathe, you are enough.
As you grow you are enough.
You have always been and will always be
Enough.

Armageddon

She said,
There is peace in the still of the night,
when the lights come off and car engines sound like stomachs growling. There is a peace, in the sound of leaves, rustling, when the wind is still. Peace in cockroaches, crawling over your cardboard covered thighs. When the temperature is low. There is peace in the freezing cold, and numb fingers, and crying babies, and flies.

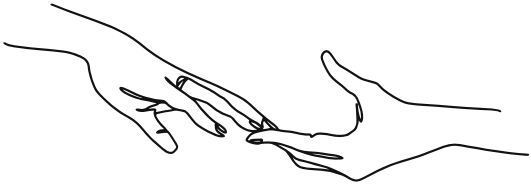
But when eyes fall on you like hail storms. Like lightning shocks, surprised by all the peace you find in your nothingness.
There is an Armageddon.
A war of fear that forms in the hearts of women
in these streets. There is danger here, when the dogs come out. You hear when the dogs come out. They call you beautiful, and lick their lips
like you are the soup of the day...

Every Prayer; A Prayer for Peace

There is a magic peace
that comes like a thief in the night
humble and soft upon you
a blanket tossed before day break
a silent gong after the pillage
a missing needle
or novel
or pot cover
or couch
a distant memory

Shall we dance?

I imagine our bodies pressed against each other;
the way indigo fades into violet.



Jazz and Such

When you're in a Jazz cafe
Sit adjacent t the largest speaker box
The bass is a heartbeat.
If you want to feel music alive
build your home within the walls of steel pans and trap sets and electric guitars.
Have you ever seen a room filled with squinted faces, and raised eyebrows like tears were about to flow but their wine glasses runneth over with le vin blanc (white wine)?
Have you ever heard musicians say that the sweat from thy
brow sweetens the tune?
Can you imagine our ancestors singing tunes soaked in sweat seeping through soil like an earthworm?
Everything is a dance.
And the rhythm reminds us
That everything is alive.

Golden Black Woman

"Now maybe no one else has ever told you so
But you're golden, baby
Black gold with a diamond soul"
- Esperanza Spalding

Oh Woman; you are golden,
You are more than hair
You are more than pain
You are more than fear of not fitting in
The scales should be ashamed of telling you
how much you weigh in this world.
You are gold

Photo of me at St. Anns River

Dear Men of Midnight, Magic and Wonder

Dear Men of Midnight, Magic and Wonder.

You do not need to be indestructible
and void of humanness to be considered man.

"To be tough and tender is to be human."

Be safe on these streets Man of Magic,
there are people
searching everywhere for potions and spells
they think can be found in your blood.

Man of Wonder,
when they say that they lose you in the darkness
remind them that you do not see the sun when the
moon is out.

It Be Like That Sometimes

Today I wanted to break my bedroom mirror
Saw a girl two shades too light to lose in the dark
Yet invisible in the brightest morning
Hair too coarse for anyone to tread a course to find her
Found I was too thick to fit into the only pair of jeans I own
Too soft to wear the shorts I long to love
Afraid all of me would ooze out;
the way lovers do

Yesterday I saw a light; blinding
had longed to kiss myself; gorgeous
Wondered how God dared to do it
Wonder how my mind does it;
see my thighs as makers of flames; rocks colliding
Then the cape-less superhero

The Ballad of Bad Days

Mother said there'll be dark days
That will pass like a morning's haze
One day our tears will dry
Like a riverbed; by and by

Mother said when darkness comes
Pick up your scales and run
Or stare at the sky at night
And it will pass you; by and by.

We will never forget the past, I said
If our tears should dry like a riverbed.
She said, "Never, the past comes by
On a river; by and by."

Does it visit for longer than planned?
Like Columbus on Caribbean land?
Do the memories make you cry
when the past comes; by and by?

Some lucky ones have peace long days
For some the darkness comes and stays
But someday you will die
and they will leave you; by and by

Dancing with Yourself

There is a peace that comes in dancing with yourself:
learning how not to step on your own toes.

A peace that comes with the pep talks, patience:
forgiving yourself and trying again.

A peace, in learning that some dances are best kept private.
Like a diary of all of your broken pieces, hidden between
pages with all of your peaces holding them together.

Broken Siren

My mirror looked at me with empty eyes today.

Said she didn't feel like
Corinthians 13.
said she heard herself clanging as if she were a lone marching band
had heard herself breaking; felt love seeping out
felt lust creeping in.
Said she screamed today, in grief,
heard her neighbour whisper, "jezebel"
Said she added new instruments to her lone band.

I said, "I know what it feels like to be broken siren;
all temptress and no murderer.
No powerful.
All victim to you own thoughts.

Told her to look me in the eyes and tell me she wasn't all that with slight.
Tell me she wasn't saved, blessed and loved.

Heard her hips crack.
Felt a woman rise up.

He Is Above All Things

Now, I remember that all these things
of the word are temporary.
every hurt; a hurdle.
every pain; a dandelion seed
drifting
through
the
wind
resting, but never forever,
returning
to
the
ground
as if it had never been.
but the love of God endures forever
so I press on.

We always too loud; even when we quiet

I recall the distance across the room. Her eyes, sunken and staring, lost. She has spoken about the times her voice was caught; trapped in her throat, not in the poet way, not romanticized, not like teenagers lost for words falling in love in coming- of- age novels. She was choking, near death and voiceless.

I recall her saying “this is the type of thing that happens when we stay silent about the important stuff for so long, we forget how to speak about it, we forget that it matters, they pretend we’re not speaking because our voices become clanging pots, our tears, dripping faucets in dark rooms, so they speak loudly to drown us out, our voice is new to them. We should understand that.”

I remember her retelling the story about the time she was called “girl” how her eyes shut tightly in remembrance. I recall the tremble in her voice, the gulp before she called herself “woman”. This is what happens when we stay silent for too long, we hear our voices like clanging pots and dripping faucets, we accept it, we do not correct, we understand, like good girls.

New Year

In some worlds, a New Year sounds like gunshots.
Smells like sulphur and iron.
Looks like red raindrops flooding streets
with love and hate.
In those worlds
peace of mind is prohibited
and there is a war against wholeness.
But at this holy alter,
I ask that you worship your warships and demolished battlefields
relinquish your weapons and rebuild yourself.

The Art of Free

Let me breath
Escape
There is life in this old body,
still.
These bones only ache
for stationary
Sanctity
Sanctuary
Serenity
Sweet Silence; calm me
Break me; that I will escape
from myself
And return
Whole
Swoon
Let me breathe

Sunset in Cunupia

The Things I have heard

I admire the way she stands like that,
Like the sun has risen and is resting on the horizon
The way she speaks
Slowly
Smooth,
Like the slow-motion frame
Of an ocean's waves
Crashing against the shore
But at midnight
On a Sunday
She is glorious when she is existing.

I've heard the elders speak fondly of her
Like she were tea leaves and the earth were a sickly child
Like she had healed and cooled
And made storm on the earth.

Had trampled, then calm.
Like virus made antidote.

I heard she when she was born the moon had parted the clouds to shine on her face.

Heard she was left on the side of the street to die.
Heard she found home in the arms of a man who spelt love H.U.R.T
Heard he loved her, often, with arms closed, and with palms closed, and doors shut
Heard she learned to make love, like kneading flour;

Firmly.

When you added too many tears, thicken the mixture then pretend it never happened; like you intended to bake 6 loaves of bread.

And when you add too much flour, cry some more.
And knead.
And when the mixture is too much,

Put it into a larger bowl,
And knead
The mixture, large enough to feed, a family of nine

Nine.
No.

Heard she learn to say no at 19.

Heard she learned to walk in different languages.
Like invisible;

Shoulders bent forward and back hunched, eyes watching the floor.

Learned to walk like prayer,
Eyes watching God, tear filled, hopeful "ye thou I walk through the valley
of my neighbourhood past 12, I shall fear
no man taught toxic masculinity.
For thou arth with me."

Heard she learned to choose men like making tea
1) Choose your leaves wisely;
Throw away the ones with holes
Rinse the ones you want,
Put it to draw,
Wait for it to steam
and when the kettle screams it's time to pour it out
take what you need
and leave.

Heard the elders speak fondly of her
Like she had been earth and earthquake and aftershock
Had lived stories; too many to recount.
Heard she found strength in them all
And that's why she stands like that,
Like the sun has risen and is resting on the horizon (giving you time
to marvel at her greatness)

why she speaks
Slowly

Smooth,
Like the slow-motion frame
Of an ocean's waves
Crashing against the shore
She knows she is glorious when she is woman.

And we are a multitude of metaphors because there is nothing like us.

Nothing existing like we are, woman.

What does it feel like to be earth?

What does it feel like to be earth?
To blend in with nature like she birthed you,
like she bent backwards, and rounded
because she's been 9 months for an eternity.

What does it feel like
to be all these shades of perfect?

You must marvel at yourself daily; you should.

It takes strength to be all this woman.
All this goodness made human.

I commend you.

Medium-Sized Metaphors

She is not a silent thunder.
She is not the calm after the storm.
She is not peace made plentiful.
Neither passive nor passive aggressive.
She cannot be likened to the soothing flow of a calm stream.
She is not a still breeze on a cool evening.
She is lightening.
She is called Arson.
She is an abundance of emotions worn for all to see.
She is a cold, raging waterfall.
She is not the perfect blend of sweet and salty.
She is fire and ice.

A Truth

I dreamt I was
falling
at
90 degrees
pouring
myself
into
a bottom less womanhood
Cupping my spillage
with a lightweight left hand
Not yet woman
Still a child forever transitioning
Left hand, limp
Cup, waiting to be filled
Me, hoping to never land.

The End as The Beginning

everyday I am the same,
and on some days, I feel as though someone has pulled the curtains aside, opened the louvers, and it is almost Christmas, and I am dusty, and cats have peed on every "gazette paper" titled "Newsday" and "Express" and "Guardian", and I cannot be cleaned, and on Christmas day I am three layers of incandescent light bulbs hanging in a gallery for three years straight, and some of my lights refuse to blink.

Then.
Suddenly, I am not.
And I can see my reflection in the windows.
And I am lights on a Christmas tree,
blinking, slowly,
on white walls.

It is a silent night on most days though

Womanhood Welcoming

A gentle kiss; lips and fragile white
left towels
to wipe away childhood mistakes.

here, blood red never leaves completely;
made to stain.

the towel upgrade;
tissue
folded
then compressed
leaving
Red-lipped womanhood
The only one I do not regret entering into.

Day light confessions [I]

Sometimes
I am jealous of her dandelion existence.
The way the wind blows her in his direction
and she swoons gracefully.

He welcomes her; floating to him
and seems to forget that I exist.
I am jealous of her dichotomous nature
She is a listless free-spirit.

I am a sunflower;
rooted and withering.
Waiting on the rain to come and the sun.

On some days we are both beautiful.
but on some days, she swims with a family of ducks
and I am a black swan.

Always, I am a black swan.
with hidden white feathers.

Most days, I am afraid to open my arms; to embrace myself.

Dear self,
Today, I am not.
Today, I am a sunflower

Waiting on the rain to come
and the sun.
But I will not wither.

Not everyone knows how to tend to a sunflower.
Let them have dandelions,
Let them have favourite flowers that are not you.
Let them be as they are; different.
You are incomparable to anyone else,
and you are no less wonderful.
I hope you feel beautiful and loved, and enough and happy today.

The Wait

Kisses pressed against smile like lip gloss.
Dancing tongues that waltz bodies into walls
Breaking breaths like bread, feasting, quickly, but slowly.
Fingers intertwined like baskets trapping heat.
Eyes telling stories for voiceless souls
bearing a kaleidoscope of memories.
Arms that feel like home.
I love yous that smell like a t-shirt wet from tears that reek
of honesty and trust.
Surely something created purely for my passion would be spelt
with 8 letters.
Felt like aching feet,
being rubbed past 10.
10 fingers, gripping
tightly to thighs.
To keep legs stationary, eyes asking politely never to leave.
8 letters written to say I love you.

Dear Somebody,
The wait will be worth it.

Selfie in my first apartment

I Hope You Find it, or that It Finds You

Your arms weren't made to hold lovers at midnight.
You were created to absorb sunshine while darkness surrounds you.
You are a shrub that won't cast a shadow in fear of inferiority.
I know it feels like your most promising trait is invisibility.
Like your fingers were made to hold on to your nothingness for comfort.
I understand that it doesn't feel like abuse when it's the only love you know.

But

There's a joy that comes when you hold a pen...
a happiness that becomes you when words form like art before your eyes.
There's a hope that comes.
A sense of purpose that holds your hand and leads you to that last letter.
A peace.
And I want you to find it.

I Know the Love You Desire

Dear Self,
I know the love you desire,
The scars that haunt you
Your war against loneliness.

I've felt your dampened pillow cases,
Heard your muffled cries.
Saw you smile, laugh, dance, sing,
And pretend.
I know you hold your own hand,
and hug yourself to sleep,
and hug yourself awake.

I want you to be happy now,
But push pass temporary forevers,
Read, relax, breathe, cry because you must.

Pick yourself up,
Dust yourself off
Now, walk about your Father's business.

Be patient enough to be found.

Be Patient Enough to be Found

Be
Patient
` Enough
Be To
Patient Be
Be Patient Enough To Be Found
To
Be
Be Patient Enough To Be Found

The Beginning of an Era

A Human Experience

Through these windows
I look above
and beyond the sky there is a mass of nothingness
yet,
I feel the earth, a crystal ball; spinning slowly
the maker's hands surround and encompass,
is within and with-out simultaneously
at a thought I return to this vessel having fallen into myself,
out of the mass
looking above, my mind wandering, I feel as trapped as I am,
small, in the midst of the mass, a vastness beyond me, of which I am.

Suddenly, it Makes Sense

I sit, hunched forward,
waiting,
writing,
singing,
dancing along to life's rhythms,
I feel the bass, and follow the beat, until it drops
and I am lost, yet still I wait
I find the tempo, slow, suave,
pero no vienes, you don't come
so I wait longer,
and he comes, sauve,
to teach me cuando estoy aprendiendo
siempre, I am learning
the more I learn, I see him,
finally, I see him, I know
Finalmente, estoy aqui con el.
Ahora, siempre, estoy emocionante
Now, always, I am happy.

These Roots are Better

I crave the stability of a tree
I wish to have roots; deeply planted

I am these roots; deeply planted
I am more stable than a tree

Though the winds may come, shake, and shift me
I am steadfast

404 Error: Love Not Found

Please check connection.
Have you tried switching your network?
Temple → Connectivity → Show Available Networks → Select “Source”
→ Restart

The Sun's Lover

If moon these of the controls bodies water.

How it no over could have power this

body, made-up of the same.

These HIGH Tides
AND low TIDES

These moods, must be children born of the moon,
surely, if we (everything created) are one,
the provider of my midnight light is no exception.

Align-Ascend

Heaven; above, of peace and love = a reflection of the sky
Hell; the pit of magma = a reflection of the earth's core

My hell flames red, orange, yellow; destructive,
yet,
though it be low is rooted; stability

Between, I am earth, nature, creation

Above, I am.
My heaven flows blue as the morning sky to indigo as the night,
and white.

And so, I rise

Would God Call it Euthanasia

Her eyelids, dim bulbs flickering in darkness, signalled that it was time to wrap up. A speck of white appeared and quickly spread, then there was light. As she arose and dusted her knees, she hoped to God that this one would work. It was roughly 5 o'clock by now, and overcast, with a misty gloom. She could see the specks of dust dancing in the dim light between the blinds. She sauntered toward them in admiration, then, twisting the wand, peeped out at a single bleeding-heart vine plant. Marvelling at the red, oozing out unto the white surrounding it, and searching for the pink that was not there, she recalled a conversation she had overheard, in a taxi three years ago. A pale white lady seated to the left of her, sunflower in hand, was babbling on with another.

"I got this at the Green Market," Pale Sunflower-lady said. "I don't know what it is about yellow, these days it seems to catch my eye. My garden is filled with red..."

"Of course," her friend cut her off. Laura took this to mean that Sunflower-lady loved red. It was also evident since she had earlier spoken about a time she bought her sister red heels for her birthday, knowing she would not like it, just so she could have it. Laura was invested in the conversation, and though she remembered the lady only as 'the pale lady in the taxi with the sunflower', she remembered the overwhelming joy in her voice as she continued.

"You know the poy tree? I think that's how it's pronounced, po-wi, pow-ee," with each try she had pronounced it more wrong, but her friend knew she had meant poui, and said yes anyway. "Right, well I think it's that that made me like it you know, I normally see the pink but in Port-of-Spain I saw a yellow that just wow, when you walk under the tree you feel like you're walking on gold it's just beautiful." The image of the pale lady babbling on, with no pauses to breathe began to fade, and the memory ended.

Two months ago, Laura had become the pale lady loving red, so she bought her first plant; the bleeding-heart vine. However, in the bleakness of the afternoon, this was the first time she realized how well the bright red blended in with the dull. When she acknowledged the way that the colours seemed at home in the presence of the pale grey of the ground, the neighbour's cat, golden brown and white, ran toward it with purpose, then, after touching the stem, went about its business.

Twisting the wand, she stared as her plant disappeared with the light. Then, with her eyes closed and arms stretched out on both sides, she made her way through the bedroom door, readjusting her arms as needed, until she arrived in the living room.

Twisting left, her right arm stretching across her chest, to the wall, she gestured to turn the lights on. A gust of wind lifted the curtains into waves, and one curtain, trapping a paperweight, brought it crashing to the floor, stopping her in her tracks. Not long after she had successfully examined the room and found the paperweight standing upright, hiding under the computer table ahead of her, she felt her heartbeat quicken, and wiping her palms against her dress felt her wedding band twist slightly. The moss coloured curtains had trapped the light but the wind, barging in at all angles, lifted the curtains into a twirl, caused the hems of all four to point left; toward the kitchen, and the light made its way in, under the waves. As the winds eased and the curtains stood, slightly swaying, the room became larger, and her heartbeat, as if it were a leaf, tossed into the sky, slowly drifted down.

Walking straight ahead, then right, closing the windows, she stopped to assess the kitchen in the near distance. Her mind, blankly drifting away, she could hear her neighbour's music beyond the kitchen wall. She often wished she had known about the paper-thin walls before making the deposit. However, being the first tenants in an apartment building came with its perks; a close relationship with the landlord (which meant the freedom to use his vacuum, and his hose, to wash the car), first choice of parking, and even to some regard, the respect of the newer tenants. Yet, when a toothpick fell upstairs, and it sounded like someone was about to fall through the floor, and when a cell phone rang next door and her pot covers shook, all the perks counted for naught. She hurried to the kitchen to shuffle through the pot

cupboard, a practice she had acquired and used to silence her neighbor.

However, when she got to the kitchen and began the ritual, familiar words rang out though the wall.

"Explaining my depression to my mother; a conversation. Mom, my depression is a shapeshifter, one day it is as small as a firefly in their palm of a bear, the next, it's the bear."

There was something about Sabrina Benaim's poetry that got her good, touched her soul, as she often so eloquently put it. I believe it was the honesty in her voice that touched her, a sort of "I am naked in front of you right now, what I'm saying is true, and it hurt me to write this" vibe was like thick fog when she graced a stage. This was her favorite poem. "Anxiety is a cousin visiting from out of town, depression felt obligated to bring to the party; mom I am the party, only I am a party I do not want to be at." This was the best part of the poem if she was completely honest.

"Who would love any other part of the poem? That's blasphemy, I mean, given that it's a great poem in general, everyone should love all the parts but, if I'm completely honest, this is the best part... to be honest" she said it to everyone she played the poem to, it had essentially become a 'people I play Sabrina's depression conversation poem to' template.

As the poem ended, she realized that it had become softer. Perhaps her neighbors heard her bellowing out the words as though it were her own poem, she thought. This reminded her of her grievance with the paper-thin walls, and in remembrance, she peered at the wall at the right of her as though she could see straight through it, to her husband. She imagined him lying on his back; his right leg at an acute angle, his left knee pointed to the ceiling, left and right heel and big toe touching.

How thin the walls are, yet not thin enough, she thought, walking cautiously to the door. Taking a deep breath then knocking twice before entering, she prepared herself. The creaking of the door was her formal introduction to her husband. She stood in silence at first, then clicked the light on then off to see if he would flinch, he didn't.

"Just checking to see if you're alive," she said, with a jolt of happiness in

her voice, as she deepened her plastic grin into a wide 'U'. He did not move. "I got up a while ago and don't know what to cook, so I figured it best to come ask you. What you want for food?" A genuine smile curved on her face as she recalled four years ago when she had asked him "what for food?" and he wittily responded, "F for food," as though they were children singing alphabet songs. He seemed lost in himself this time around. She received no response, yet stood, observing his frail body, curled into a ball.

Closing her eyes, she remembered the way it once was. On days like this she would never leave their bed, but would fold into him, warming her toes between his calves, her palms pressed together and etched between her tights, trying to get her head against his back, to no avail, but always trying, until eventually settling for her forehead barely touching his shoulder. She easily fell into rituals, and asking him what he wanted to eat, getting no response, then leaving quietly, was in no way new.

"Traiton?" She called out, then waited a couple seconds for an answer before taking her leave and closing the door quietly behind her.

Traiton seemed asleep with his eyes closed. His last active memory: glancing around the room at his many paintings. It hadn't dawned on him until yesterday how many greens he used in his artwork, and red. It was his happiest day, the last day he painted. If he were as sharp as Laura, he'd say it was a Tuesday at 2 in the afternoon. He had bumped his toe on the foot of the bed and hopped away in pain, slid on a paint brush and fell, landing with his right hand pressing down against a tube of paint.

The art was an accident, like so many beautiful things. He grabbed the nearest canvas and wiped it on the floor to save the paint, then wiped his palm against the remaining white on the canvas. This was the first time he used that much yellow, and there was something outstanding about it. He repeated the same with orange and green on the same canvas, then stared at it in awe, as though it had created the art itself.

He was a strange man, as most would refer to him, but a pleasant one, with a welcoming and familiar face. Recalling how they first met, Laura had exhausted the words, "well you know Traiton look like everybody", and sometimes followed the story of how they first met.

In her final year of university she'd frequently pass by him while walking through the Student Activity Centre and often caught herself staring at him, wondering if he was friend she had in Primary School. Eventually she approached him, fuming that he had been seeing her for months, and not once acknowledged her presence. She also understood that after so many years people are bound to look a little different, and perhaps, like her, he had been wondering but said nothing.

"Hi." She had finally mustered up the courage to greet him, and seemed to have whispered, so she cleared her throat and repeated, "Hi." The second time might have been too loud but it did the job, and he spun around somewhat confused.

"Hey," he squinted, and lowered his head, tilting it slightly to the right. You could tell he was doing calculations in his mind. "Hello," he paused, and squinted again, "Sorry to be rude but, I know you?"

She was ready to explode at this point but kept her calm, muttering only, "It's okay, people have told me that I look really different," which was a bold lie. Traiton grew more confused. "Brian... is Laura, stop playing." The silence became increasingly awkward by the second, but his disposition seemed more pleasant, then he smiled.

"Hi, Laura." His smile grew wider as he stretched his hand out to her. "I'm Traiton."

She always ended the story at that point, leaving out the parts about her embarrassment, the way she would have turned bright red, had she been three shades lighter, but he always filled the gap, recalling how bright her dress was. "First time I ever saw a dress that orange," he'd say, laughing each time, "so ORANGE." This was the story of how they met, "gay," as he would often refer to it, but "cute," as she would correct him, while twisting a curl in his hair, or 'removing something' from his beard, which they both knew, was a ploy she used to keep touching him.

Now, he lay there, resting peacefully, broken and sinking further and further into the mattress, his hazel eyes, blanketed by its lids.
Suddenly, a plate fell in the kitchen; the shards of glass spread about eight inches away from her feet. She glared through the window, in frustration,

ignoring the broken glass on the floor and the second plate, sitting at the edge of the counter.

Out the kitchen window she would see that the ground was still a pale grey, and the cat was still roaming. You could tell that he thought of himself as a bigger cat; a lion perhaps, hunting in the wild, and his prey was the shadow of his tail.

A loud creak was heard about two doors down, and Mrs. Marceline Shaw, the elder in the apartment building, was coming around the corner, walking towards the cat. There was a suspicion in her eyes as she approached Laura's apartment, and something seemed to stop her in her tracks as she arrived at the kitchen window.

After lifting Kittens into her arms, and stroking his head gently, she looked up to the sky, then, looking left to right, her gaze descended. She seemed to be assessing her surroundings. Turning rightward to return to her apartment, she noticed that Laura's kitchen window curtain had been shifted enough to reveal the white of Laura's eyes in the low light.

Aware that she might not have wanted to be seen, but incapable of seeing someone and not greeting them, she shouted through her broad smile, "Good evening Laurie!"
This dragged a response out of Laura, and she drawled, "Good morning, Mrs. Shaw."

"Is everything okay, love? I saw your little eyes behind the curtain and had to say good day. It's so cold outside. I hope you're wearing something to keep you warm in there. I come out here to get the kitty one time because I don't want him locked out if the rain start to fall, yuh know." Marceline's speech was a weird combination of upward inflections, to which Laura nodded. Wondering why she asked if everything was okay, she smiled as naturally as she could muster then responded.

"Yes, everything is fine. I just broke a glass. Honestly, I think I'll stick to plastic from now on because things keep breaking. All week. This entire week. After all that broke in this pass week I probably have one plate and about three drinking glasses by now." She felt the frustration rising and calmed herself with a deep breath, "so yes, aside from that, everything

great."

"Nice. Well, that's not nice, the things breaking all the time all the time but you have to be grateful it's nothing worse. Take care of yourself okay, and keep yourself safe. Don't be like me and wait until you get old to start taking care of yourself, when your husband dead and gone and all you have is your cat who always running away." She laughed, Laura didn't, but faked a smile to be polite.

"I will try," Laura responded.

"Well, let me take him inside, he doesn't stay in my hand like this all the time you know, so before he try to run." She held him tighter in her arms, and walking away, shouted with all the strength she could muster, "Have a blessed night, Laurie and tell Traiton I say good evening."

"Surely. Same to you Marcey," She felt herself cringe and immediately regretted saying 'Marcey'.

Sweeping the shards into the scoop, she happened upon a trail of ants which she followed into her bedroom. On her knees, she saw that below her bed was a bowl of food, no more than a day old, the spoon lay on the left with its concave side upward. Instantly, her body went cold.

Trembling, she flopped sideways unto her hip, then curled into a foetal position and began weeping silently. Eventually she felt herself rocking gently, and her mind wandered into yesterday, and the day before that, and every day before that when he had suffered with depression, how everyday seemed like the worse one, but was trumped by the following day.

She remembered the prayer that made its way into her daily ritual, how she prayed for his pain to go away, how she had exhausted herself yesterday, and bellowed out in her heart for God to open the skies and lift him up into heaven. She recalled praying for the forgiveness of his sin before he even committed the act. "Lord, if he does commit suicide, let us switch places, take him up with you, and send me to the other place". He had endured too much pain in the years that passed, had wailed too often to wail after death. As night fell, rather than wait for the day he would

would take his own life, she prayed for courage and prepared his favorite meal, she was sure now that he would get into heaven, that he could rest in peace, and his wailing would end.

The only sin to pray for was hers.

Somehow the cat had gotten into the kitchen, onto the counter, and she heard the last plate break. Carefully, she arose and stood at the bedroom window. Twisting the wand, she watched as silhouettes of trees, which stood houses away, appeared between the blinds, then stared aimlessly, at her plant, and the short shadow it casted. She searched for red in the dark and hoped that somehow the streetlamp ten feet away would shine on the white but was greeted by drooping shades of grey.

With haste, she made her way through the bedroom door, passed the kitchen, and through the living room door. As she marched around to the back of the house, she could see the colors of the plant become clearer; grey looked white again, and red. Ambling back into the house, and closing the door behind her, she placed the plant next to the landline.

Knowing that the only thing left to do was to decide what next to do, she sat on the couch and stared, switching her gaze between the phone and the plant that stood beside it.

Mrs. Marceline's cat, which was adventuring about the kitchen counter seemed to sense the sadness in his midst. He turned his head to the body that sat on the couch, bent forward and legs apart, with its right palm cupping its left elbow, pressing against its knee. He hopped off of the counter and motioned closer to Laura, whose chin rested in her left palm, with her head turned slightly to the left, staring in the direction of the computer table where the phone and plant sat.

Laura could feel a presence in the room with her, and looking down, saw the cat motioning towards her. She bent forward and lifted him into her lap, almost smiling. Sinking into the couch, she seemed lost in the way its fur felt between her fingers, but soon, returned to helplessly gazing. The red of the plant, had somehow managed to blend in with the moss curtains, the dark grey floors, and the pale olive-green walls.
She sat with her legs crossed, lost at the thought of making a decision, still

gently stroking Kitten's head, when Traiton's cell phone began to ring. She thought to answer it but did not know what to say, so she let it continue to its end then planned to turn it off, and place it into the draw of broken electronics in his bedroom.

The next day she initiated the new ritual.

Cat footprints at the hostel

The World Between What is Real

Have you ever sat under a starry night's sky and for a moment felt minute? To think that those tiny things shimmering at a distance are, in fact, much larger than you are, that you can see them but were they to have your vision, they would be unable to see you. Have you ever studied the night's sky? Its grey clouds against the deep dark navy blue? Stared intensely enough to notice that when lightning strikes the sky lights up as if it were day break?

All these things and more, she thought, on her walk to the shore. Often, when the night caught her deep in observation it was because she was in search of Orion's belt, but this night she had not found it, instead she heard the crickets chirping quietly between the orchestra of toads amidst the green. A fog seemed to create a screen before her eyes as she stared into the distance, but she trekked blindly through approaching a bench which stood at the end of the fog, a couple feet away from the crashing waves, and she sat.

Flipping through her notebook in search of a clear page to write she felt a presence beside her but saw nothing. On the empty page she wrote:

The fog is floating,
My mind is open,
While I'm alone in a dream,
With oceans wide in a star filled night where the river reaches the sea.
I'm alone within my dreams,
The only world that's in between what's real,
And then a fog ascends the stream,
Clear skies; the night.

The waves crashed gently against the shore, one coming in every 5 seconds like a well-rehearsed dance. It reminded her of water-bending, the slow, steady pace and peaceful sound. Attentive, with her eyes closed, she drifted into stillness and felt oneness with the presence beside her.
"Do you someti-"
"Sometimes have trouble forgiving myself? Yes, on occasion, more times in the past than I can say in the present." She answered....

Thank You for Reading.

tabula rasa